

## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Kumar Gandharva** : Edited by Ashok Vajpeyi, Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Akademi, Bhopal, Rs. 45.00.

Why a book on Kumar Gandharva? Music lovers are familiar with the melodious and well modulated voice of Kumarji—his powerful expression, portrayal of the mood of Ragas, sincere love for art, and total dedication. Kumar Gandharva, the singer needs no introduction.

But music lovers are not aware of his multi-faceted personality. The present book "Kumar Gandharva" edited by Shri Ashok Vajpeyi tries to portray this personality from all angles and evaluate his contribution in today's classical music.

This book has four parts. The first deals with Kumarji's singing in details. What are the characteristics of his singing? In which field he excels? How he moderates the Khayal singing? Bhajan—how he sings it and why it is sublime? Even some defects of his singing did not escape the analytical criticism, such as his pronunciation peculiarities, continuous use of falstato or ineffectiveness in lower octave and his other limitations. Ashok Damodar Ranade does full justice to this part.

The second part analyses Kumarji—the composer and reformer—his creativeness in the field of Raga Sangeet, experiment with different folk tunes of Malawa, Devas and new compositions. He says—"Folk music is the essence of Raga Sangeet." Ragas are created from different folk tunes. His improvisations are direct outcome of his research on folk tunes.

The thing which makes the book interesting reading is the personal touch, which is revealed in 'conversation' portion. Here Kumarji himself describes his childhood, early training in music, his life and ideals, his personal likings and dislikings. We find Kumarji as a family man, a friend in need, a man who believes in plain living and high thinking. The critical mind in him, power of reasoning, his sincerity and sensitiveness, practical approach and above all humaneness, constitute the personality. Ravindra Pingé's 'Reminiscences' unfolds some of his inner qualities.

One who sings in the obedience to the inner voice attains 'siddhi' — it is said. And he has achieved it. As a master, he has given stress on rigorous

practice, self-discipline and perseverance. He has suggested some measures for preservation of classical music in the chapter "Sangeetkar Ki Aur Se".

This is a book written on Kumar Gandharva and at the same time by Kumar Gandharva—the most controversial and colourful personality in today's classical music field. We, the music lovers are grateful to Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Akademi, Bhopal for shouldering the responsibility of presenting a comprehensive volume on a contemporary singer with multi-dimensional talent.

*Krishna Banerjee*

**Music in India, The Classical Tradition**, by Bonnie C. Wade, Prentice-Hall, Inc., NJ. USA., 1979. 252pp.

The book gives a survey of North and South Indian Classical music traditions, with chapters on musical appreciation, melody, instruments, meter, performance genres of the Hindustani and Karnatic traditions, with musical examples, plates and a historical map of India. It is an interesting book as the approach to the subject by the author is made using western methodology, which is quite different from that of Indian musicologists. The author must be praised for her devotion to Indian music and her wish to find a means of making it comprehensible to the western reader. But the history and performing traditions of Indian music are very difficult to understand even for an Indian musicologist with sound training in performance. It is not surprising then that the author, who is a foreigner to Indian musical tradition, and who has spent only a few years in India, has misunderstood many facts relating to historical and musical traditions. For example, she writes (p. 54) 'Lord Visanu...names.' In fact, do not end each day by reciting the hymn, but start the day with the recitation. It is called "Vishnu Sahasranamam" ("The thousand names of Vishnu"), and in the text itself are the words "...stuvan namasahasrena purushaha satato itaha", which means "when a person wakes up."

On page 70 the author writes "Tyagaraja however...using the pitch Ni." The statement is incorrect. Tyagaraja has composed his two pieces without the pitch *kakali nishada*, which is the second variety of Ni, and which is used by Muttuswami Dikshitar and other composers. He has in fact used the first variety of Ni—the *kaisiki nishada*.

Another error appears with regard to the tuning of the tambura. The author writes (p.51) "The tuning of the tambura...Pa Śa Sa Sa. This is a misunderstanding on the part of the author. The tambura is always tuned Pa Sa Sa Śa but it may give the impression of Pa Sa Sa Sa to the Sa audience because of its tone color.

In the section on Khyal the author writes (p. 170): "Singers introduce ...chiz." It cannot be described as "a few seconds" or "occasionally" to "five minutes." The singing of the *ālāp* in Khyal is only short compared with the *alap* of Dhrupad. The length of *alap* is dependent upon the context of the performance and the *gharana* (school) of the singer and is in any case longer than a few seconds.

The author has made far too much use of secondary sources. This tends to make the work appear to be a compilation and gives the impression that the author is avoiding making her own observations. This puts the reviewer in the embarrassing position of having to criticize some other book instead of commenting on the author's own views. One generally consults authoritative books on a subject and then commits himself in writing a book to a personal point of view. It is appropriate to quote extensively when the author is going to dispute the statement of some other scholar or prove a controversial statement, or emphasize her own observation as coinciding with the opinion of an authority on that subject. Especially in Chapter 6, one feels that one is reading the work of Robert Brown instead of the present writer. The author could also have avoided quotations from textbooks such as P. Sambamoorthy's series on South Indian Music, and must be careful when choosing books for quotation of the authority of the writer on the subject. For example, the author makes this statement regarding Tyagaraja (p.200): "He subsisted only by singing and begging." The statement is attributed to L. Isaac in a book entitled *Theory in Indian Music*. This statement hurts the feelings of many Indians. L. Isaac has made the statement without knowing the real concept of Hindu philosophy, and the present writer, without questioning the validity of the statement, has repeated the misconception. In fact, the composer did the "unchavruti", which is not begging—but the rule to be observed by Saints—a philosophic concept of non-possession of anything for tomorrow. As the composer Tyagaraja observed the Saintlihood, he took up the concept of "unchavruti" according to the "dharma" or code prescribed for saints. It is not begging and the statement is really misleading.

No doubt this book will be helpful to students as it covers a wide area of musical facts about North and South Indian musical traditions with examples and photographs. However, the author could have included pictures of Indian instrumentalists to illustrate Indian instruments, in addition to Americans who have been trained to play Indian instruments. The plates should represent the expert on that particular instrument as well as the simple representation of a player on the instrument. For example, Khan Saheb Ustad Bismillah Khan's picture is necessary when the author talks about *shenai*. The author seems to be more familiar with artists who studied at or teach at universities in the United States than with those who are outstanding performers in India. Hence experts and famous performers such as Lalgudi Jayaraman and M.S. Gopalakrishnan on violin, and

Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Palghat-Raghu and Vellore Ramachandran on mrdangam, are omitted from the list of expert players, making the list incomplete. In addition, the author has completely overlooked the outstanding singers of South India music, whose names are important for any reader in Indian music.

Though the book lacks some correct information, the author has presented in an enjoyable manner and with an intelligent approach the history and theory of Indian music with its two distinct styles. The book is a welcome addition to Indian musicological literature, and draws the ~~attention~~ attention of the general reader to Indian music.

S.A.K. Durga

**A Short History of Musical Life in Hungary:** By Carvina Kiado. Translated into English by Eva Grusz and P.W. Merrick pp. 48 Price not mentioned.

Seemingly a slender volume, yet, it cannot be brushed aside *although* its title commends it so. There are reasons to believe that the narrative which sparks off as a pointer to the *contour* of the whole show imbibes fillers in due course to end up as a document of discernible significance.

Music and life in Hungary have been virtually inseparable. From the very earliest of times music became necessary for peace and recreation, so essential for a people intermittently afflicted by migratory, marauding, nomadic and equestrian life akin to the earlier stages of 10th century and military vanquishments of later centuries, followed by incessant pinch of industrialized environs and existence of recent times.

A synoptical presentation of the whole evolution of musical life in Hungary will not be out of place to mention here. King Mathias, in the 2nd half of 15th Century was responsible for bringing music to the highest artistic levels. The Golden Age of Music is attributed to the last kings of medieval feudal state in the first decade of 16th century.

A continuous process of evolution led this art to Prince Rakoezi's endeavour at the music of fight for independence—Verbunkar (recruiting music)—in the earlier 18th Century. National elements, coupled with romanticism and continental influences gave place to an operatic culture which became part of the fight for independence. Ferene Erkel, the father of Hungarian Opera composed the National Anthem in 1844.

Ferene Liszt (1811-1866) a great master, a Piano virtuoso, Karoly Goldmark (famous for his opera Queen of Sheba), Ede Remenyi, the world famous violinist, Joseph Joachin, an outstanding solist, Gustav Mahler—

the Chief Musical Director of Budapest Opera House (1888-1891) are significant names and events till end of 19th century.

Twentieth century marks a phenomenal progress, in leaps and bounds which starts with the musical revival and folk music. Bartok Kodaly, the Chief exponent and builder of the Kodaly Instt. of Keskemet, the workshop of Hungarian musical education are worth mentioning here. Musical life in Hungary after the liberation became enriched with many new elements and the Symphony Orchestra of Hungarian Radio gave its first concert on 1st May, 1945. Janos Ferencsik, Chief Musical Director, revived Bartok's compositions one after the other. Foreign maestros like Yehudi Menuhin, Soviet musician Emil Gilels, visited Hungary. Arthur Bliss, Dimitri Kabalevsky came to Budapest and Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod held masters' courses.

The present day composers and performers are so many. All of them have their own musical world. The younger generation formed their New Musical Studio with Zoltan Jeney, Laszlo Sary and Laszlo Vidovszky as their eminent representatives. Formation of electronic musical studio maintained by Hungarian radio, summer operas, propagators of musical culture, mass education of music, Radio and Television, Children's Choir of Hungarian Radio and Television, public musical libraries, appearance of 2500 choirs on the choir platform and the Hungarian Jeunesse Musicales Organization guiding the musical activities of young people are the culminating highlights of the current phases of musical life in Hungary.

With this synoptical background it cannot be gainsaid that the volume affords in no uncertain terms, a chronological and to the point account of musical life in Hungary where music at the hands of brilliant composers manifests itself as a part and parcel of choirs, operas and other dramatic activities. There is hardly any solo performance, vocal or instrumental. Orchestras, symphonies and choirs rule the music scene to the delight of masses that participate in these performances and their enjoyment.

The writers have acquitted themselves creditably well in presenting the musical life of Hungarian people, in all its ramifications, artistic and didactic confines. The book is a readable presentation through and through for those who like to know about Hungary's music.

*R. Prakash*

**Himachal Ka Lok Sangeet (Folk Music of Himachal):** By Keshav Anand, Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. pp. 208, Rs. 70.00.

Geographically, Himachal Pradesh has unique physical and strategical

features determined by mountainous ranges on three sides, deep-set-in valleys, forests and peculiar flora and fauna, satiated by a net-work of streams and rivulets. Upto the dawn of India's independence and till reorganization of the states, politically cut-off from the plains below, it remained virtually exclusive pocket of history replete with shrines of diverse faiths, places of pilgrimage, legends and religious decorum. This region was divided into a large number of major and minor princely states.

The inaccessible state of its existence, gave it a socio-economic entity steeped in myth, ritual, blind faiths, pride and prejudices, more or less shrouded in mystery to the rest of India. Evidently the old civilization of Aryan origin, imbibing traces of Buddhist and Tibetan faiths and ways of life, folkways and mores which flourished within its hilly confines, culturally remained an incessant phenomena of folk-lore in dance and music. It is in this context that the need to preserve the rich heritage of its folk music was timely felt and steps were taken in that direction.

Consequently, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, as a veritable functionary in the field of music and dance, can doubtless take pride in bringing out this comprehensive volume on the subject. It has been authored by an expert, whose antecedents as an authority on the subject have nowhere been hinted at. But the bitter truth is as evident as the day that the consummate profile of this document of archival significance did involve a whole family including the departed parents of the author whose reminiscences played their part to guide him. The book is without a bibliography. The work is certainly the result of a concerted effort of personal knowledge wedded to acute observation, having drawn from knowledgeable sources and independent research carried out from region to region, folk to folk and door to door.

The lay-out of the study and its narrative is quite articulate, giving inter-alia, the genesis of the term folk-music, its implications, styles, types, its seasonal, ritualistic, mythological and regional ramifications, its classical notations, spoken wordings, its links with folk dances and their choreography and its culmination in a brief appraisal of the current vicissitudes and future hopes and prospects at the hands of the posterity that may emerge out of the socio-economic horizons of rapid industrialization and modernisation.

The author has sensibly gone the whole hog about not only collecting the basic material, permeating trends and traits, but also in depicting the whole and diverse panorama of the folk lore, as envisaged by interplay of instrumental choirs, vocal moods and modulations, attired expositions of the performing groups, formal and informal settings. The characteristics of each regional musical piece have been clearly defined, supported by song pieces and their musical notations.

There is detailed chapter on folk dances wherein a general introduction, regional survey, dresses and dress articles used, orchestra brought into play, "raagas" and "raginis" employed and other step to step analytical descriptions have been given.

A parallel volume on the history, literature, culture and folklore of Himachal Pradesh has already been published by the National Book Trust. Even though that study is based upon relevant contents of larger research studies of stalwarts like Dr. R.R. Gautam, Dr. Vanshi Ram, and other sources, yet it cannot be gainsaid that the book under review is far superior in its reach for and grasp over the subject and that too in a scholarly eloquent narrative of chaste style and high readability.

The readers would find it a pleasure to read this well-printed, stoutly got up and reasonably priced volume. This volume is bound to be welcomed by interested students of folk-lore and libraries all over India.

*R. Prakash*

**Madhyakarti:** Madhya Pradesh Ke Pandrah Sangeetkar (Fifteen music celebrities of Madhya Pradesh): Mohan Nadkarni; Raj Kamal Prakashan, New Delhi, pp. 87, Rs. 35/-

Madhya Pradesh, (as a fullfledged state of Indian Union) celebrated its silver jubilee in November 1981. The present volume, presented by Ustad Alauddin Sangeet Academy, Bhopal is a memento for this occasion. Perhaps there could not be a better contribution to make the event an event of indelible impress and impact than to publish short life-sketches with critical appreciation of artistic genius and performance of fifteen luminaries of music, from the realm of both vocal and instrumental music, who are linked with this state by virtue of birth or situational affiliation. The land of Mian Tansen, deserves credit as the task has been adequately fulfilled through the pen of the outstanding critic of music, Mohan Nadkarni whose original write-ups in English have been skillfully rendered into Hindi, consistent with the pith and meaning of the original.

A scholarly and analytical preface by M.V. KAMATH of the Illustrated Weekly of India affords an exhilarating pick-up to this collection of articles on maestros like: Alauddin Khan, Hafiz Ali Khan, Rajab Ali Khan, Amir Khan, Daggar Brothers, Krishnarao Shankar Pandit, Aarolkar, Kumar Gandharva, Abdul Halim Jafir Khan, Amjad Ali Khan, Budhaditya Mukherjee, Malini Rajoorkar, Ajay Pohankar, Omprakash Chaurasia and Kiran Deshpande. The names selected are really significant and representative of music from Madhya Pradesh in all its well known ramifications.

Doubtless, the outstanding calibre and long-cum varied experiences of Nadkarni are precisely and aptly reflected in these masterly write-ups albeit limited within their synoptical confines of compact and readable narration. In this volume the avowed ends of intent, to introduce the various men of music to the contemporary generation at large and to ensure its informative adequacy for posterity, have been well-nigh met. But it cannot be gainsaid that for the sake of significant addition to an archival heritage of this nature, more detailed, more comprehensive volumes on the subject should have been on the cards to come out in due course as invulnerable productions replete with a fair chronological placement of events, appraisal of the individual's art and achievements with a larger perspective. Unfortunately pointers to this aspect of research study are by and large conspicuous by their absence. Limited experience and the personal knowledge of the author has remained the mainstay of the endeavour and wider resorts of genuine research do not seem to have been depended upon. To be fair the overall impression of this set of articles does speak for the onward march of the Academy towards the possibility of producing lasting and commemorative literature on music and its masters.

The book bears clear print and an attractive get up, has a treasure of black and white illustrations and for its inside matter and realistic pricing commends itself for a wider readership.

*R. Prakash*

**Meri Katha (My Story)**—Ustad Alauddin Khan—Hindi Translation of Shubhmaye Ghosh's Bengali work AMAR KAIHA by Rahul Barpate, published by Raj Kamal Prakashan, New Delhi, pp. 58, Rs. 25.00.

The volume is the presentation of Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Academy, Bhopal and is part of their programme of publications on the life and work of the music luminaries of India, with the avowed intent of providing to lovers of music the feast of knowledge that would arouse, as also sustain, their interest in Indian music and to enjoy it in a spirit of understanding and appreciation.

This Hindi translation of the original work in Bengali is indebted to the latter's Marathi version. Of course, the language-gap between the original and the present piece cannot be ruled out for the difference it might have made in the rendition of the natural colour and accent of the original outpouring. But, if the elliptic style of the Hindi narrative is any indication, the lack-lustre, extempore utterances of the great Sarod maestro (who was illiterate) in his simple mother tongue do appear to have had their veritable transformation into Hindi.

During his stay at Shantiniketan commencing from October, 1952



onwards, the celebrated Ustad related his life-story in three of his evening get-togethers (MEHFILS) to the rare delight of the audience, in a candid, face to face talk, sprinkled with a flavour of subtle and subdued humour far from any mention of time and chronology, all by way of sweet and bitter reminiscences, spontaneously eased out of mind and mouth.

His was a chequered journey for attainment of invulnerable heights in music, both vocal and instrumental, in all its ramifications. Music was his first love and incessant passion for life. And towards delineating the ups and downs of this un-ending pilgrimage, the volume spells out in no uncertain terms, about the great luminary, a family back-ground of life with cannibals, conversion to Islam, ancestry of highway-men's venturesome occupation, spasms of truancy from school, the extreme step of running away from home with money removed from the person of sleeping mother, a long period of vagrancy at Banaras, Calcutta, Rampur etc., all in quest of music and all to the dismay of extraneous and untoward influences that spoil youngsters going astray like him. After learning about music, as much as he could, the celebrity sought peaceful abode at the court of the Raja of Maihar in M.P. as the mentor of the Raja but without delinking with Rampur, the threshold of his gurus. The charisma of settled life at Maihar, a year's trip to Europe as a member of Uday Shankar's ballet troupe, sweet and simple impressions of the Ustad about European life itself and the significance and esteem extended to Indian music by the lovers of western music, have been solemnly embodied in this volume. What is more significantly conspicuous throughout the pages of this volume is the simple life, personality and character of an Ustad named Allauddin Khan, leading behind an invulnerable legacy of music through successors like son Ali Akbar Khan, daughter Annapurna, Son-in-law Ravi Shankar and grandson Ashish Khan, all as the living symbols of India's secular heritage, image and realms of muses devoted to the winsome shrines of Saraswati.

The book has been exquisitely produced for a modest price. But too much of black colour about its get up could be avoided to lend serenity and sobriety to its appearance.

*R. Prakash*